
Executive Summary

The Defense Secretary's Commission on Base Realignment and Closure was chartered on May 3, 1988 to recommend military installations within the United States, its commonwealths, territories, and possessions for realignment and closure. The Congress and the President subsequently endorsed this approach through legislation that removed some of the previous impediments to successful base-closure actions.

For over a decade, the Department of Defense has been unable to improve the effectiveness of the military base structure or to realize the significant savings that might have been gained through the realignment and closure of unnecessary or underutilized military bases. This situation is largely the result of 1977 legislation that mandated Congressional approval for any closure affecting 300 or more civilian employees of the Department. In this same legislation, the Department was expressly directed to comply with the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act for all base-closure decisions.

Despite the absence of closure actions, there is general agreement within the government that the national defense could be improved, and its cost reduced, through a more efficient military base structure. This conclusion was endorsed in 1983 by the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control (the Grace Commission), which recommended that a non-partisan, independent commission be established to study the base-closure issue. The Defense Secretary's Commission on Base Realignment and Closure was chartered in

the spirit of that recommendation.

This Commission's recommendations for closure and realignment affect 145 installations. Of this number, 86 are to be closed fully, five are to be closed in part, and 54 will experience a change, either an increase or a decrease, as units and activities are relocated. The Commission also makes several additional recommendations that address potential problems in implementing the Commission's closure and realignment recommendations and certain other matters that the Commission has discovered during its review of the military base structure.

From the outset, the Commission sought the most appropriate criteria to govern the nomination of installations for realignment or closure. While cost reduction was an important reason for its chartering, the Commission decided that the military value of a base should be the preeminent factor in making its decisions. With a primary focus on military value and improving the overall military base structure, the Commission elected not to set savings targets. Nevertheless, the Commission estimates the realignment and closure actions recommended in this report should lead to annual savings of \$693.6 million and a 20-year savings with a net present value of \$5.6 billion.

The Commission's analysis of military installations began with a review of the military force structure and its basing requirements. Representative of the kinds of installation characteristics mandated by force structure are availability of acreage and airspace for realistic combat training

and provisions for survivability of strategic forces.

The Commission found that many bases have experienced an erosion of their military value as a result of urban development. The resulting encroachment has forced the modification of missions at many installations. The acquisition of additional land, especially in less populated areas, may be needed to satisfy military requirements.

After a review of the general condition of the military base structure, the Commission began the process of selecting bases for realignment and closure. The data supporting this process were provided by the Services and validated by the Commission and its staff. Installations with similar missions were grouped together to facilitate consistent analysis. The bases were then screened to determine whether the installations were appropriately sized to support current or future requirements and whether their physical attributes were appropriate to accomplish assigned missions.

When it was determined that an installation's mission was impaired, the Commission looked at relocation alternatives. This review focused on the ability of a receiving installation to accommodate and enhance the mission of the units or activities being relocated and whether the costs of the closure and realignment package could be paid back with savings in six years.

As realignment or closure candidates were identified, the Commission took an initial look at environmental impacts. This review was not intended to be a substitute for the environmental analysis required by the Congress during actual implementation of the approved base realignments and closures. As a result of this review, the Commission found that closures generally resulted in positive impacts on the environment rather than negative ones. As individual realignment and closure actions are taken by the Secretary of Defense, full opportunity for public hearings will, of course, be provided.

Besides environmental issues, the public will also be concerned about the economic impact of base closures. The Commission reviewed the history of base closures since 1961 and found that closures were generally less traumatic than people anticipated. In many cases, Defense Department jobs have been replaced by new civilian jobs, and the bases themselves converted to civilian uses. Notwithstanding this record of success, the Commission has recommended to the Secretary of Defense several actions that should be taken to aid local communities in their redevelopment planning.

As a final task, the Commission considered the process for realigning and closing bases in the future, which will be necessary as military strategy and force structure change.